We are all in uncharted waters with the scale of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. I am in Las Vegas with many ARA members attending the The Special Event/Catersource and CONEXPO events and it is truly amazing to see how quickly things have changed over the course of this week. Conferences, concerts, sporting events, schools, and countless other events and large gatherings are being suspended or canceled until there is better visibility into how many people are already infected and how the virus is spreading. In light of these circumstances, ARA has canceled all meetings and events on the calendar through May 30. These cancellations include our National Legislative Caucus and the Construction/Industrial and General Tool Shared Interest Group and Exhibitor Advisory Council meetings that were scheduled for next week. We also are encouraging ARA state boards to cancel ARA meetings and events that are planned through May 30. Some meetings may be rescheduled once we have more information, but because of the need to plan caucus so far in advance, it is very unlikely that it will be rescheduled this year. We are very disappointed to have to cancel these events, but the health and safety of our members is our first priority.

We made these decisions out of an abundance of caution to prioritize the health and well-being of our rental community while also supporting health officials and civic leaders as they work to contain the virus. Hopefully you have already seen the coronavirus information on our website. We’ll keep you updated as new information becomes available. We also will publish the results of our coronavirus impact survey tomorrow and we will resurvey you frequently to provide you with the most up-to-date information on what’s happening on the business front.

We all hope that this can be contained by proper hygiene and dramatically limiting travel and large gatherings, but there has already been significant economic impact that we will need to address. Many ARA members in the party and event sector have reached out to ARA to tell us that they are experiencing unprecedented cancellations. Most of these businesses are seasonal and spring is a prime season for events. The party and event sector alone represents nearly $4 billion in 2020 revenues and is by far the most labor-intensive sector within the equipment and event rental industry. This disruption has happened with such speed and severity that many companies are worried about survival. We have expressed these concerns to the Trump administration and are asking for more to be done to support small businesses. Specifically, we have asked for Small Business Administration (SBA) loan and disaster relief by way of bridge loans with zero or low interest that would allow small businesses to continue operating throughout the emergency.

Please reach out to me if you have questions or ideas on how we can help ensure that no one has to choose between their health and their work.

We are in choppy waters, but we will navigate through this dynamic situation together.

Regards,

Tony Conant
CEO